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FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7309  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 3281  
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0016  
RUEHPOD/AMEMBASSY PODGORICA PRIORITY 0080  
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA PRIORITY 3758  
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO PRIORITY 0735  
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE PRIORITY 4514  
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB PRIORITY 3278  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 3525  
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SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT APPROVES HIGH COURT NOMINEES, ADJOURNS  
FOR AUGUST RECESS

REF: TIRANA 452

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Parliament ended its session on July 28 on a much-needed quiet note, approving all six of President Topi's nominees for the High Court, along with Prime Minister Berisha's proposed cabinet changes. Parliament's approval of the High Court nominees marked a welcome detente between the Prime Minister and President, but came only after a spirited round of horse trading between Berisha and Topi. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Parliament capped its summer session on July 28 by approving all six of President Topi's nominees for the High Court. The approval came after Prime Minister Berisha reportedly instructed Democratic Party (PD) MPs to approve the nominees. Parliamentary approval of the six justices capped a months-long struggle between President Topi, Prime Minister Berisha and the Parliament over the High Court nominees (reftel).

¶3. (SBU) In return, President Topi reportedly agreed to go along with PM Berisha's proposed cabinet changes, as well as his candidate for the position of Chief of Defense (CHOD). Topi also agreed to appoint the PM's longtime personal lawyer to the High Council of Justice.

¶4. (SBU) The Parliamentary session didn't end without its share of drama, however. A rumor that Prosecutor General Ina Rama was about to submit a request for the arrest of former Minister of Defense Mediu reportedly prompted the Parliament Bureau to abruptly declare that July 28 would be the last day of the current session. The sudden end to session not only headed off any action against Mediu, but also postponed parliamentary consideration of the new Electoral Law and a host of other contentious issues.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Parliament's approval of the High Court nominees brought a welcome respite to the ongoing feud between the President and PM over the High Court. It also marked the beginning of Parliament's August recess, giving Albania's political class time to rest up and head to the beaches before what promises to be a contentious fall session. In the end, both the President and Prime Minister can claim victory in that both sides got some - but not all - of what they wanted out of the Parliament.

WITHERS